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WORK AND THE PERCEIVED QUALITY OF LIFE A FINAL REPORT
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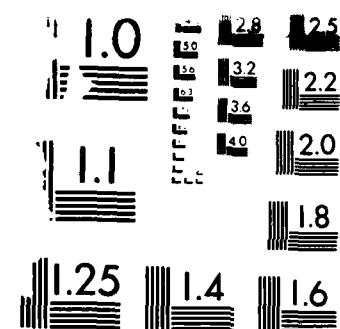
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Work and the Perceived Quality of Life:

A Final Report

by

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Prepared for

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Work and the Perceived Quality of Life:

A Final Report

> The experience of work has the potential to substantially influence the perceived quality of life (pQL). The goal of this research program was to examine the alternative mechanisms through which work might affect pQL. Within this project, pQL was defined as affective beliefs directed toward one's life. The concept of pQL can be operationalized with measures of satisfaction, happiness, and related indices of subjective well-being. The affective beliefs assessed by such measures may be directed toward life as a whole (referred to as "overall pQL") or toward an individual component of life such as work life, family life, or leisure life (referred to as "domain pQL").

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Rice, McFarlin, Hunt, and Near (Tech. Rep. ONR-1) reviewed prior research relevant to the relationship between organizational work and pQL. Based on this review, they developed several theoretically useful products: (1) explicit definitions of both major concepts (i.e., organizational work and pQL); (2) a mathematical representation of the factors determining both domain pQL and overall pQL; (3) a general conceptual framework capable of identifying alternative pathways through which the experience of work might affect pQL; and (4) four specific propositions concerning the mechanisms by which work can influence overall pQL. The empirical research conducted for this project is all based on the conceptual framework provided in this first report.



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The major purpose of both Rice (Tech. Rep. ONR-2) and Rice, McFarlin, Hunt, and Near (Tech. Rep. ONR-5) was to examine the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction. The job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship provides an index of the strength with which the perceived quality of work life is related to overall pQL. Rice (Tech. Rep. ONR-2) reviewed prior research on the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship, focusing on four key issues: (1) the causal direction of the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship; (2) temporal trends in the strength of the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship; (3) the role of suppressor variables in the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship; and (4) the extent to which the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship is moderated by individual difference variables.

Rice, McFarlin, Hunt, and Near (Tech. Rep. ONR-5) used data from a large national sample of employed adults to examine further the fourth issue listed above: the role of individual differences as moderators of the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship. The potential moderator examined in this study was job importance. Two important results emerged from this study: (1) Several measures assumed to be reflective of job importance failed to moderate the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship; and (2) Regardless of the level of job importance, the strength of the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship was stronger than expected on the basis of prior research (25% shared variance rather than the 10% shared variance). The failure to find significant moderator effects was interpreted in terms of the implicit weighting hypothesis that is incorporated into our model of domain pQL. This hypothesis proposed that domain importance does not

enhance the predictive power of domain satisfaction scores because domain satisfaction scores implicitly reflect importance (i.e., high levels of satisfaction or high levels of dissatisfaction can occur only when the domain in question is important to the individual). Therefore, it is redundant to add domain importance to a prediction equation that already includes domain satisfaction as a predictor.

Rice, Bonacci, and Bunker (Tech. Rep. ONR-3) examined the general impact of organizational work on overall pQL by examining the effect of removing work from the person's life (through involuntary unemployment). When compared against national norms, a local sample of unemployed subjects reported significantly lower pQL. Furthermore, the strength of this negative effect was related to the degree of psychological involvement with the respondent's prior job. The greater the involvement with the prior job, the lower the pQL reported during periods of unemployment.

Rice, Frone, and McFarlin (Tech. Rep. ONR-4) sought to test the distinction between two alternative pathways through which work-related variables might have an effect on overall pQL: (1) effects mediated through changes in the perceived quality of work life; and (2) effects mediated through changes in the perceived quality of specific nonwork life domains. Extensive preliminary analyses indicated that only two work-related variables showed any substantial correlation with overall pQL (1) the degree of interference between work life and family life; and (2) the degree of interference between work life and leisure life. Detailed follow-up analysis of alternative causal pathways was therefore limited to these two variables. Path analyses of data from a national survey indicated that both pathways were

significant. Inter-domain interference was significantly related to both the perceived quality of work life and the perceived quality of nonwork life. Furthermore, both the perceived quality of work life and the perceived quality of nonwork life yielded significant path coefficients when predicting overall pQL. Consistent with the predictions based on our additive model of overall pQL, the direct effects of inter-domain interference on overall pQL were too small to have either practical or theoretical significance. Rather, the predominant effects of this work-related variable on overall pQL were mediated through the perceived quality of work life and the perceived quality of nonwork life.

Frone and Rice (Tech. Rep. ONR-6) further explored the key variable involved in the path analysis study, namely, perceptions of interference among important life domains. More specifically, we examined conflict between work roles and family roles in a local sample of non-teaching professional staff employed in a university. Consistent with hypotheses based on an expectancy theory analysis of role conflict, we found that work-family conflict was determined by an interaction between family involvement and work involvement. The highest degree of conflict was reported by respondents who were highly involved psychologically in both their work roles and their family roles.

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"Work and the Quality of Life," Department of Behavioral Science and Leadership, United States Military Academy (West Point), March 6, 1984.

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